A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Ten

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

AND FAMILY ORDER

What God Has Joined Together

"What therefore God hath joined together,

let not man put asunder."

Matthew 19:6

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: The Household Under God

Marriage and family are not social constructs that human civilization invented and that subsequent generations are free to revise. They are creation ordinances — structures God embedded in the nature of humanity before sin entered the world, confirmed by Christ himself as the permanent standard, and given specific apostolic instruction for their conduct under the New Covenant.

The household under God is the foundational unit of the covenant community. What the church is corporately, the household is to be

domestically: a community ordered by love and submission, shaped by the Word, governed by servant leadership, and oriented toward the worship of the one God who created it. A church full of disordered households is a church whose corporate life is built on sand. The health of the assembly and the health of the households that compose it are inseparable.

Book Ten treats the scriptural teaching on marriage and family in seven chapters:

- Chapter One — Marriage defined by creation: what God made, what Christ confirmed, and why the definition is not subject to cultural revision.
- Chapter Two — Headship and submission: what Ephesians 5 actually teaches, what it does not teach, and the chain of authority that makes it covenantally coherent.
- Chapter Three — The permanence of the marriage covenant: the narrow standard Christ establishes, what the permitted exceptions actually say, and what they do not authorize.
- Chapter Four — Children and parenting: the biblical mandate for covenant instruction, the rod and reproof, and the goal of training.
- Chapter Five — The household and the church: how the domestic order reflects and sustains the ecclesial order.
- Chapter Six — Objections examined: exegetical responses to the most frequently raised challenges on headship, divorce, and parenting.
- Chapter Seven — Technical reference and study guide: Greek and Hebrew terms and review questions for individual or group study.

Chapter One: Marriage Defined by Creation

The definition of marriage is not a matter of ongoing cultural negotiation. It was settled at creation, confirmed by Christ in his earthly ministry, and reaffirmed by the apostles in their letters. The church's task is not to update this definition in response to changing cultural consensus; it is to hold and teach it faithfully regardless of the cultural pressure brought against it.

1.1 The Creation Ordinance

> **Genesis 1:27**
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> "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*"
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> **Genesis 2:18, 24**
>
> "*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*"

The creation account establishes four foundational features of marriage that precede the Fall, precede the Mosaic law, and precede every cultural expression of marriage in human history:

1. Sexual differentiation: God created humanity male and female. The distinction is not incidental or culturally constructed; it is the creative act of God himself, embedded in the image-bearing nature of humanity. The two sexes are not two points on a spectrum but two complementary expressions of one humanity, created for each other.
2. The leaving: a man shall leave his father and his mother. Marriage creates a new primary loyalty that supersedes the family of origin. The bond of husband and wife is designed to be the central human relationship — more primary than the relationship with parents, more enduring than the relationship with children.
3. The cleaving: shall cleave unto his wife. The Hebrew word dabaq means to cling, to hold fast, to adhere. It is used of Ruth's (דָּבַק) commitment to Naomi ('she clave unto her' — Ruth 1:14), of Israel's commanded devotion to God (Deuteronomy 10:20), and of the marriage bond. The cleaving of marriage is a covenant commitment of the whole self — not a provisional arrangement subject to renegotiation when circumstances change.
4. The one flesh: they shall be one flesh. The union of husband and wife is the most intimate expression of human oneness available in this life. It is

physical, emotional, and covenantal simultaneously. The one-flesh union is not merely sexual; it is a comprehensive merging of two lives into a shared identity before God. These four features — male and female, leaving, cleaving, one flesh — constitute the creation definition of marriage. They are not products of Mosaic legislation or Greco-Roman social custom. They are embedded in the created order itself. Any definition of marriage that omits or revises any one of these four features is not adjusting the cultural expression of marriage; it is contradicting its creation foundation.

1.2 Christ's Confirmation

> **Matthew 19:4--6**
>
> "*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

When the Pharisees ask Jesus about divorce, he does not begin with Moses. He goes behind Moses to creation. His answer appeals to what God did 'at the beginning' — not to what subsequent legal provisions permitted or restricted, but to the original design. This is Christ's hermeneutical method for marriage: the creation standard is the governing standard, and any subsequent provision must be interpreted in light of it, not the reverse.

The phrase 'what therefore God hath joined together' establishes that every genuine marriage is a divine act, not merely a human agreement.

When a man and a woman enter into the covenant of marriage, God himself is the One joining them. This is why the covenant is binding in a way that no human authority can dissolve: the One who joined cannot be overruled by the parties he joined.

Creation Before Culture

> *Christ's appeal in Matthew 19 is explicitly to 'the beginning' — before Moses, before Israel, before any cultural institution. The creation ordinance of marriage is not a Jewish cultural artifact or a Western social tradition. It is prior to every culture, belonging to humanity as such. The church that revises the definition of marriage in response to cultural pressure has not updated an outdated tradition; it has contradicted the word of its Lord.*

1.3 The Apostolic Reaffirmation

> **Ephesians 5:31--32**
>
> "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*"

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 directly in his extended instruction on marriage in Ephesians 5. His identification of the one-flesh union as a 'great mystery' — Greek mysterion (μυστήριον), a hidden reality now revealed — discloses the deepest reason why marriage is structured as it is. The union of husband and wife is the sign that points to the union of Christ and his church. Headship and submission in marriage are not arbitrary social roles; they are the lived enactment of a cosmic reality: the relationship between the Redeemer and the community he redeemed.

This means that every Christian marriage carries a weight of testimony that extends beyond the two people in it. How a husband leads and how a wife submits is a proclamation — or a contradiction — of the gospel itself. The husband who fails to love his wife as Christ loved the church has not merely failed in a domestic role; he has misrepresented the gospel in the most intimate theater available to him. The wife who undermines her husband's authority has not merely made a personal choice; she has distorted the

picture of the church's relationship to Christ that their marriage is designed to display.

Chapter Two: Headship and Submission

No passage in the New Testament on marriage has been more misread in both directions than Ephesians 5:22--33. It has been used to justify domination and abuse. It has been dismissed as a cultural relic with no binding force. Both readings are wrong. The passage establishes a specific, covenantally grounded order that is simultaneously the most demanding standard for the husband and the most secure provision for the wife in all of Scripture.

2.1 The Full Text

> **Ephesians 5:22--33**
>
> "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

> *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."*

2.2 The Structure of the Passage

The passage is not symmetrical. Four verses address the wife (22--24, 33b); nine verses address the husband (25--33a). The greater length of the instruction to the husband is not accidental. The burden of the passage falls on the man. The headship Paul describes is not a grant of authority to be exercised for the husband's benefit; it is a weight of responsibility to be borne for the wife's.

The pattern Paul uses for the husband's love is Christ's love for the church — described in three stages:

5. He gave himself for it (verse 25). The standard is self-sacrifice unto death. The husband who appeals to Ephesians 5 to justify control, comfort, or convenience has not read his half of the passage. His model is a man who went to the cross.
6. That he might sanctify and cleanse it (verses 26--27). Christ's love for the church is not merely affectionate; it is purposive. He died to make the church holy. The husband's love for his wife is to have the same purposive quality — actively concerned with her spiritual flourishing, her growth in holiness, her presentation before God as someone who has been nurtured toward Christlikeness by the man who led her.
7. He nourisheth and cherisheth it (verse 29). Thalpo (θάλπω) — cherish — means to warm, to soften by warmth, to tend with care. The husband's leadership is characterized by tenderness, not hardness. He creates an environment of warmth and security in which his wife can flourish.

2.3 What Headship Is

Headship, as Paul defines it, is servant leadership after the pattern of Christ. Three features define it:

- Headship is initiating love: the husband moves first, as Christ moved first. He does not wait for his wife to create the conditions he requires before he gives himself. He gives himself regardless, as Christ gave himself for a church that was not yet holy.
- Headship is purposive responsibility: the husband is accountable before God for the spiritual climate of his household. He will answer for how he led — whether his wife was nurtured toward holiness or neglected, whether his children were trained in the fear of the Lord or abandoned to the world.
- Headship is protective authority: the husband stands between his household and the threats — spiritual, physical, relational — that press against it. He absorbs hardship rather than deflecting it. He is the first to suffer on behalf of those in his care, not the first to be exempted from suffering by those in his care.

2.4 What Submission Is

> **Ephesians 5:22--24**
>
> "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*"

The Greek hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) — submit, be subject to — is a military term meaning to arrange under, to place in the proper rank. It is the same word used of Christ's submission to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28), of every believer's submission to governing authorities (Romans 13:1), and of the church's submission to Christ. In each case, hupotasso describes the ordering of a relationship, not the inferior worth of the one submitting.

Four things submission is not:

- Submission is not the erasure of the wife's voice, judgment, or personhood. Proverbs 31's description of the excellent wife is a portrait

of extraordinary competence, initiative, and authority exercised within the covenant order, not despite it. The submitted wife is not a silent functionary; she is the crown of her husband (Proverbs 12:4).

- Submission is not unconditional compliance with ungodly demands. Peter and the apostles declared that we ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). A wife is not required to participate in sin, illegal activity, or the violation of her covenant with God in the name of submission to her husband. Where a husband's instruction conflicts with God's command, God's command governs.
- Submission is not passive acceptance of abuse. The protection of the household is the husband's responsibility (1 Timothy 5:8). A husband who abuses his wife has not exercised headship; he has violated it in the most fundamental possible way. No doctrine of submission requires a wife to endure ongoing physical or severe emotional abuse.
- Submission is not contingent on the husband's deserving it. Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 3:1--6 specifically addresses wives of disobedient husbands — the submission is not conditional on the husband's spiritual state. The wife's conduct is the means by which God works on the husband's heart.

> **1 Peter 3:1--2**
>
> "*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*"

Peter's instruction establishes that a wife's submitted, holy conduct has evangelistic power. The husband who will not receive the word from a preacher may receive it from a wife who lives the word before him daily.

This is not a lesser form of influence; it is the most sustained and intimate form of witness available in human experience.

2.5 The Chain of Authority

> **1 Corinthians 11:3**
>
> "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*"

The marriage headship structure is embedded in a larger chain of authority that governs all relationships in God's ordered creation: God, Christ, man, woman. The husband's authority over his wife is not self-originating; it is derived authority, flowing down from Christ, who himself operates under the Father's headship.

This chain has a critical implication: a man may not exercise authority over his wife unless he is himself under authority to Christ. The husband who is not submitted to Christ has no legitimate headship to exercise. He is a link in a chain that has been disconnected from its source. His authority becomes mere domination — power without accountability, assertion without covenant — which is precisely the distortion that has brought the doctrine of headship into disrepute.

The husband who walks submitted to Christ — in prayer, in the Word, in accountable community with his elders — is the husband whose headship is both legitimate and protective. His wife submits not to a self-appointed authority but to authority that is itself submitted to the One who purchased the church with his own blood.

The Husband's Accountability

> *1 Peter 3:7: '*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*.' The husband who fails to honor his wife does not merely damage his marriage. He damages his prayer life — his access to God is hindered by his failure in the*

> *domestic covenant. This is the measure of how seriously God regards the husband's responsibility to his wife.*

Chapter Three: The Permanence of the Marriage Covenant

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. A contract is a conditional agreement between parties that can be dissolved when its terms are violated or its purpose no longer served. A covenant is a binding commitment established by oath before God, whose dissolution requires more than one party's dissatisfaction. Christ's standard for the permanence of marriage is the most demanding in all of Scripture, and it must be taught with equal clarity alongside the grace that meets every person who comes to God having failed to meet it.

3.1 The Governing Standard

> **Matthew 19:4--9**
>
> "*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female... What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*"

Christ's reasoning is the same reasoning he applies to the definition of marriage: he goes behind Moses to creation. The Mosaic provision for divorce — the certificate of Deuteronomy 24:1 — was not God's ideal.

It was a concession to the hardness of human hearts, permitted to regulate what could not be prevented but never representing the original design.

'From the beginning it was not so' is Christ's explicit statement that the Mosaic provision was a departure from the creation standard, not its expression.

The governing standard is permanence. The one exception Christ names is porneia (πορνεία) — sexual immorality. This is a narrow exception. It does not cover incompatibility, emotional distance, financial difficulty, loss of affection, or the general failure of a marriage to meet the parties' expectations. It covers actual sexual sin — the violation of the one-flesh covenant by union with another person.

3.2 The Pauline Texts

> **1 Corinthians 7:10--11**
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> "*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord: Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.*"

Paul's instruction is unambiguous: the wife who departs has two options.

She may remain unmarried, or she may be reconciled to her husband.

Remarriage to another while the first husband lives is not presented as a third option. The verb 'remain' (Greek meno — μένω) is present tense — ongoing, sustained, not a temporary status pending the next relationship.

The phrase 'not I, but the Lord' in verse 10 is Paul's most explicit acknowledgment that this instruction carries the direct authority of Christ's teaching in the Gospels. He is not expressing a personal preference or a culturally influenced opinion. He is transmitting the Lord's own standard.

> **1 Corinthians 7:15**
>
> "*But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*"

The phrase 'not under bondage' — Greek dedoulotai (δεδούλωται), from doulos (slave) — means not enslaved, not compelled to maintain forced cohabitation with an unbelieving spouse who has chosen to leave. This is freedom from the obligation of forced marital cohabitation, not a general dissolution of the marriage covenant granting full remarriage rights.

The context of verse 15 is the departure of an unbelieving spouse who is unwilling to remain — not a provision that overrides Christ's standard of Matthew 19:9. To read 'not under bondage' as permission for any remarriage whenever a spouse abandons the marriage requires ignoring verse 11's explicit limitation (remain unmarried or be reconciled) and reading a general exception into a specific pastoral provision.

3.3 The Malachi Standard

> **Malachi 2:14--16**
>
> "*THE LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant... Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away.*"

God's own declaration — he hates putting away — is the Old Covenant expression of the same standard Christ confirms in the New. The word translated 'putting away' is the Hebrew shalach (שָׁלַח), the same verb used for the certificate of divorce. The God who joins cannot be indifferent to what the parties he joined do to the union he created.

Malachi's description of the wife as 'the wife of thy covenant' is the most precise statement in the Old Testament of what marriage is: not a romantic arrangement, not a social contract, but a covenant — a binding oath made before God, witnessed by God, and held by God.

3.4 Grace for Those Who Have Failed

The permanence standard of marriage must be taught clearly — and it must be taught alongside the grace that meets every person who comes to God having failed to meet it. The church that teaches the standard without grace produces either despair or hypocrisy. The church that teaches grace without the standard produces license and moral drift.

The grace of God reaches every sin, every failure, every broken covenant — including broken marriages. The person who comes to God in genuine repentance over a failed marriage finds the same forgiveness, the same new beginning, the same access to the throne of grace as every other repentant sinner. What grace does not do is retroactively authorize what Scripture prohibited, or eliminate the consequences of covenant violation that continue to shape the present situation.

The pastor who guides a person through the aftermath of a broken marriage must hold two truths simultaneously: God's standard is permanent and is not revised by the difficulty of meeting it; and God's grace is sufficient for every failure and does not abandon those who have failed. Both truths are in the text. Both must be in the teaching.

Chapter Four: Children and Parenting

Children are not the accidental byproduct of the one-flesh union; they are its covenantal fruit. The household that God designed includes children who are to be received as heritage and reward (Psalm 127:3), trained in the fear of the Lord, and presented to the covenant community as the next generation of disciples. The parenting task is among the most serious responsibilities assigned to any human being, and it is one that Scripture addresses with remarkable precision.

4.1 Children as Covenant Heritage

Psalm 127:3--5

> "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.*"

The word 'heritage' — Hebrew nachalah (נַחֲלָה) — is the word used for the covenant inheritance of the land of Israel — God's specific gift to his people. Children are not a burden to be managed or a lifestyle choice to be optimized; they are a gift from God, entrusted to parents for the specific purpose of being shaped into disciples of the covenant.

The arrow image is instructive: arrows are formed carefully, aimed deliberately, and released purposefully. The parent's task is to form the child — in character, in faith, in knowledge of the Word — and to release him or her into the world as someone capable of hitting the mark. Arrows that are not formed will not fly straight. Children who are not trained will not walk in the way.

4.2 The Mandate of Covenant Instruction

> **Deuteronomy 6:6--7**
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> "*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*"

The Shema instruction of Deuteronomy 6 is the Old Covenant's most comprehensive statement of the parental teaching mandate. Several features of the instruction are significant:

- The words must first be in the heart of the parent: the instruction begins with the parent's own formation before it addresses the child's. A parent cannot transmit what they do not possess. The parent who attempts to instruct their children in the Word of God while living in spiritual

superficiality will produce children who recognize the gap between the teaching and the life.

- The instruction is to be diligent: the Hebrew shanan (שָׁנַן) means to sharpen, to whet, to incise. The image is of instruction that cuts deeply and repeatedly until it is embedded in the child's consciousness. This is not once-a-week religious instruction; it is the sustained, pervasive integration of God's Word into every dimension of the child's daily experience.
- The instruction is continuous: sitting, walking, lying down, rising up. Morning and evening, movement and rest, formal and informal occasions. The covenant household is one in which the conversation naturally returns to God's Word in every context, not one in which religion is confined to designated religious times and the rest of life proceeds without it.

> **Proverbs 22:6**
>
> "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*"

The word 'train' — Hebrew chanak (חָנַךְ) — carries the sense of initiating, of dedicating, of creating the conditions for a pattern of life to be established. It is the root of the word for the dedication of the Temple. The training of a child in the way of the Lord is a dedication — an act of covenant consecration in which the parent gives the child to God by the manner in which they form him.

4.3 The Rod and Reproof

> **Proverbs 13:24**
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> "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*"
>
> **Proverbs 29:15**

> "*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*"
>
> **Hebrews 12:6, 11**
>
> "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*"

Scripture is unambiguous: discipline is love expressed through the willingness to create discomfort for the sake of the child's long-term good. The parent who refuses to discipline is not being kind; Scripture says explicitly that he hates his son. The comparison with God's own parental discipline of his children (Hebrews 12:5--11) establishes that discipline is not a sign of failed relationship but of genuine parental investment in the child's character.

The rod and reproof together are the biblical instruments of correction: the rod addresses behavior through physical consequence calibrated to the child's age and the offense; the reproof addresses understanding through verbal instruction that explains why the behavior was wrong, what the right standard is, and how the child's heart needs to be oriented. Discipline without reproof produces compliance without understanding. Reproof without the rod produces understanding without consequence. Both together produce wisdom.

The goal of biblical discipline is always the child's heart, not merely their behavior. The parent who disciplines to produce external conformity has not met the Deuteronomy 6 standard. The parent who disciplines to bring the child's heart into alignment with God's Word — who explains, corrects, prays with, and pursues the child's genuine repentance — is doing the work the covenant requires.

4.4 The New Testament Parental Mandate

> **Ephesians 6:4**
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> "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*"

Paul's instruction to fathers in Ephesians 6:4 has two parts: a prohibition and a mandate. The prohibition is against provoking children to wrath — Greek parorgizete (παροργίζετε), to exasperate, to embitter. Children are provoked to wrath by arbitrariness, harshness, impossible standards, inconsistency, favoritism, contempt, and the failure of fathers to be genuinely present in their children's formation. The Colossians parallel adds 'lest they be discouraged' (Colossians 3:21) — the father who is all correction and no affirmation, all authority and no warmth, produces children who lose heart.

The mandate is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Two Greek words carry the instruction:

> ***Paideia (παιδεία) —*** nurture, training, discipline — the whole program of education and formation that shapes a person from childhood. Used in Hebrews 12:5-11 for God's own discipline of his children. The comprehensive formation of the child in the way of the Lord.
>
> ***Nouthesia (νουθεσία) —*** admonition, instruction, warning — from nous (mind) and tithemi (to place). The placing of truth in the mind. Verbal instruction that addresses the child's thinking and understanding, not merely their behavior.

Both paideia and nouthesia are 'of the Lord' — their content, their standard, their goal are all defined by what God's Word requires, not by what the surrounding culture commends. The Christian parent does not supplement a secular formation with occasional religious instruction; he provides a formation that is comprehensively oriented toward the Lord from the outset.

Chapter Five: The Household and the Church

The household under God and the church of God are not parallel but unconnected institutions. They are organically related: the household is the domestic expression of the same covenant that the church embodies corporately. The health of one depends on and contributes to the health of the other in ways that the contemporary tendency to treat home life and church life as separate spheres has obscured.

5.1 The Household as the Proving Ground of Leadership

The elder qualification of 1 Timothy 3:4--5 establishes the household as the proving ground for ecclesiastical leadership: 'One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)' Paul's logic is an argument from the lesser to the greater. The household is the smaller and more intimate sphere; the church is the larger and more complex one. If a man cannot govern the smaller sphere well, he cannot be trusted with the larger. This means the state of an elder's household is not a private matter that the church should politely ignore; it is a public qualification that the church has a legitimate interest in assessing.

Conversely, the elder who governs his household well — whose wife is honored and flourishing, whose children are in subjection and godly — has demonstrated in the most intimate and least controllable environment possible that he is capable of the leadership the church requires. The household is the elder's most credible credential.

5.2 The Early Church in Household Context

> **Acts 16:31--34**
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> *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house… And he took them*

> *the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*"

The household conversion pattern in Acts — the Philippian jailer, Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 44--48), Lydia (Acts 16:15), Crispus (Acts 18:8), Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16) — reflects the organic relationship between the family unit and the covenant community. The gospel entered households as households, not merely as collections of individuals. The head of the household's faith set the direction for the whole household's response.

The early church met in households (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). The household was not a supplementary meeting venue; it was the primary context of the New Testament church's gathered life. The household's order was therefore directly visible to and formative of the church's order.

5.3 The Family Altar

The consistent pattern of Scripture is that the covenant household is a worshipping household — one in which prayer, Scripture reading, and instruction in the Word are regular practices of the domestic life, not reserved exclusively for public assembly.

> **Joshua 24:15**
>
> "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"

Joshua's declaration is the covenant household's founding statement: the household is under the authority of the Lord, and its head has declared his allegiance publicly. The application for the Christian household is the same: the father who establishes the spiritual direction of his household by his own example, his own leadership of family prayer and Scripture reading, his own public identification with the God of the covenant — that father is doing what Joshua did, in the domestic sphere entrusted to his care.

The neglect of the family altar — the regular practice of household prayer and Scripture in the home — is among the most consequential spiritual failures of Christian fathers in the contemporary church.

Children who see their father pray, who hear him read and discuss Scripture, who observe his genuine submission to God in the ordinary moments of domestic life — those children receive a formation no Sunday school class can replicate. Children who attend church regularly but never see their father pray at home receive a divided signal: religion is for public gatherings, not for ordinary life.

Chapter Six: Objections

6.1 On Marriage and Headship

'Ephesians 5 Is a First-Century Cultural Accommodation'

OBJECTION:

> "*Paul was working within the patriarchal assumptions of the first-century Roman world. His instructions on headship and submission reflect those cultural conditions, not a timeless divine standard.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** Paul does not ground his instructions on headship in Roman social custom. He grounds them in the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:23--24) and in Genesis 2:24 (Ephesians 5:31). Neither ground is culturally conditioned: the union of Christ and his church is an eternal theological reality, and the creation ordinance of Genesis 2 precedes every culture. When Paul invokes these grounds, he is appealing to realities that are as permanent as creation and as the gospel.

Furthermore, the argument proves too much. If Paul's grounding in creation and in Christ-and-church is insufficient to make his instructions permanent, then the same hermeneutic would require revising every other apostolic instruction that Paul grounds in creation or the gospel — including the definition of marriage itself. **'Mutual Submission in Ephesians 5:21 Eliminates the Headship Structure'**

OBJECTION:

> "*Ephesians 5:21 says 'submitting yourselves one to another' — this mutual submission governs the entire passage and eliminates any asymmetrical authority structure.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** Ephesians 5:21 ('submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God') introduces a section that describes three specific, asymmetrical relationships: wives and husbands (5:22--33), children and parents (6:1--4), servants and masters (6:5--9). In each case, the submission is one-directional, not mutual: wives to husbands, children to parents, servants to masters. The passage immediately following verse 21 does not apply mutual submission to the husband; it applies agape sacrifice. Mutual submission governs the general posture of the Christian community toward one another in all things; it does not eliminate the specific directional structures that the following verses explicitly establish.

6.2 On Divorce and Remarriage

'My Situation Is an Exception to Christ's Standard'

OBJECTION:

> "*The circumstances of my marriage were so extreme that surely Christ's standard does not apply. My spouse was abusive, or*

> *abandoning, or unfaithful in ways beyond the specific exceptions Christ named.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** The pastoral responsibility here requires both honesty and compassion. Christ's standard is narrow and it is stated clearly. The two provisions — porneia in Matthew 19:9 and the departure of an unbelieving spouse in 1 Corinthians 7:15 — are the provisions Scripture gives. The pastor who expands these provisions to cover cases that Scripture does not name is not being pastoral; he is substituting his own judgment for Christ's. He is also, ultimately, failing the person he is trying to help, because the pastoral relief he offers is not grounded in the Word and will not bear weight in the person's conscience before God.

The compassionate answer to a person in genuine suffering within or after a failed marriage is not to revise the standard to fit their situation. It is to walk with them through the suffering, to apply the full grace of God to their genuine repentance and failure, and to help them find the path forward that most honors the Word — which may include ongoing singleness, genuine reconciliation where possible, or, in cases where the scriptural grounds genuinely apply, a freedom that the Word itself provides. The standard and the grace must both be held, fully and simultaneously.

6.3 On Parenting

'The Rod Is Child Abuse'

OBJECTION:

> "*Physical discipline of children is abusive and harmful. The contemporary consensus of child psychology has shown it to be counterproductive.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** The hermeneutical principle of this manual governs the answer: the canonical witness of Scripture establishes the

> standard, and the claims of any secular discipline are evaluated against that standard rather than the reverse. Scripture is unambiguous that the rod is an act of love, not hatred (Proverbs 13:24), that it produces wisdom (Proverbs 29:15), and that God himself disciplines those he loves in analogous ways (Hebrews 12:6). This is not obscure or disputed within the canon; it is consistent across both Testaments.

The legitimate concern behind the objection — that physical discipline can be administered abusively, angrily, and harmfully — is acknowledged by the same Scripture that commands the rod. Ephesians 6:4 prohibits provoking children to wrath. Colossians 3:21 prohibits discouraging them. The rod administered in anger, without explanation, disproportionately, or as an expression of the parent's frustration rather than the child's correction is not the rod Scripture commends; it is an abuse of it. The answer is not the abolition of the rod but its administration according to the scriptural pattern: calmly, purposefully, followed by reproof and restoration, in the context of a relationship of genuine warmth and love.

Chapter Seven: Technical Reference and Study Guide

7.1 Greek and Hebrew Terms

> ***Dabaq / דָּבַק (Hebrew) —*** to cleave, cling, hold fast — Genesis 2:24; the word for the marriage bond; also used of Israel's commanded devotion to God (Deuteronomy 10:20)
>
> ***Nachalah / נַחֲלָה (Hebrew) —*** heritage, inheritance — Psalm 127:3; the word for God's covenant gift of the land to Israel; applied to children
>
> ***Shanan / שָׁנַן (Hebrew) —*** to teach diligently, to sharpen, to incise — Deuteronomy 6:7; describes the manner of parental instruction: repeated, cutting deeply

Chanak / חָנַךְ (Hebrew) — to train, to dedicate, to initiate — Proverbs 22:6; root of Hanukkah (dedication); the training of a child as a covenantal dedication

Mysterion (μυστήριον) — mystery, hidden reality now revealed — Ephesians 5:32; the one-flesh union as a sign pointing to the union of Christ and his church

Hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) — to submit, to arrange under, to place in proper rank — Ephesians 5:22; a military term; used of Christ's submission to the Father, believers to governing authorities, wives to husbands

Thalpo (θάλπω) — to cherish, to warm, to tend with care — Ephesians 5:29; describes the husband's tender care for his wife as Christ cares for the church

Porneia (πορνεία) — sexual immorality, fornication — Matthew 19:9; the one exception Christ names for divorce; a narrow term for actual sexual sin

Paideia (παιδεία) — nurture, training, discipline — Ephesians 6:4; the comprehensive formation program for a child; used in Hebrews 12 for God's own discipline

Nouthesia (νουθεσία) — admonition, instruction — Ephesians 6:4; from nous (mind) + tithemi (to place); the placing of truth in the mind through verbal correction and instruction

Parorgizete (παροργίζετε) — to provoke to wrath, to exasperate, to embitter — Ephesians 6:4; what fathers are commanded not to do to their children

7.2 The Four Features of the Creation Ordinance

- Male and female (Genesis 1:27) — sexual differentiation as God's creative act, not cultural construction

- Leaving (Genesis 2:24a) — the creation of a new primary loyalty superseding family of origin
- Cleaving (Genesis 2:24b) — covenant commitment of the whole self, not a provisional arrangement
- One flesh (Genesis 2:24c) — comprehensive union: physical, emotional, and covenantal

7.3 Contrast Panel: Biblical Headship

DISTORTION — Domination: Authority exercised for the husband's benefit. The wife exists to serve his comfort and convenience. Submission enforced by control or fear. The husband's needs are primary; the wife's are secondary.

BIBLICAL PATTERN — Servant Leadership: Authority exercised for the wife's good. The husband's model is Christ's self-giving sacrifice. Submission received as a gift, not extracted by force. The husband's greatest concern is his wife's spiritual flourishing.

DISTORTION — Passivity: The husband abdicates spiritual leadership. He is present physically but absent spiritually. Decisions are avoided, the family altar is neglected, the household drifts without direction.

BIBLICAL PATTERN — Engaged Leadership: The husband initiates spiritually. He leads prayer, reads Scripture with his household, sets the covenant direction of the home, and is the first to repent when he has failed.

7.4 Study Guide

Chapter One — Marriage Defined by Creation

8. What are the four features of the creation ordinance of marriage in Genesis 2:18--24? Explain each in your own words.
9. When the Pharisees ask Jesus about divorce in Matthew 19, he goes behind Moses to creation. What does this tell us about how Christ evaluates subsequent legal provisions in relation to the original design?
10. Paul calls the one-flesh union a 'great mystery' in Ephesians 5:32. What mystery is he referring to, and what does it mean for the theological weight every Christian marriage carries?
11. (Advanced) If marriage is a sign pointing to the union of Christ and his church, what does a marriage characterized by domination (rather than self-giving headship) communicate about Christ? What does a marriage characterized by contemptuous independence (rather than willing submission) communicate about the church?

Chapter Two — Headship and Submission

12. Why does the instruction to the husband in Ephesians 5:25-33 occupy more space than the instruction to the wife in 5:22-24? What does the proportion tell us about where the burden of the passage falls?
13. What does the Greek word hupotasso mean, and in what other New Testament contexts is it used? What do those contexts tell us about the nature of the submission Paul is commanding?
14. What are the four things submission is not, as identified in this chapter? Why is each qualification important for correctly understanding the instruction?
15. (Advanced) 1 Peter 3:7 says a husband's failure to honor his wife hinders his prayers. What does this tell us about the connection between the

domestic covenant and the vertical covenant with God? How does the marriage relationship affect the husband's access to God?

Chapter Three — The Permanence of Marriage

16. Christ says Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of hearts, but 'from the beginning it was not so.' What does this tell us about the relationship between Mosaic concession and creation standard?
17. What does 1 Corinthians 7:11 say are the two options for a wife who has separated from her husband? What does the absence of a third option tell us?
18. What does 'not under bondage' in 1 Corinthians 7:15 mean, and what does it not mean?
19. (Advanced) How should a pastor hold both the permanence standard and the grace of God simultaneously when counseling a person who has experienced divorce? What does it look like to honor both truths without collapsing one into the other?

Chapter Four — Children and Parenting

20. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says the covenant instruction must first be 'in thine heart.' Why does the parental instruction mandate begin with the parent's own formation? What happens when a parent attempts to transmit what they do not possess?
21. What is the difference between paideia and nouthesia as used in Ephesians 6:4? Why does Paul use both words rather than one?
22. Proverbs 29:15 says 'the rod and reproof give wisdom.' Why are both elements necessary? What does discipline without reproof produce? What does reproof without the rod produce?
23. (Advanced) Ephesians 6:4 prohibits provoking children to wrath and commands nurture and admonition. What specific behaviors produce the provocation Paul prohibits? How does a father avoid them while still maintaining the authority the passage requires?

Chapter Five — The Household and the Church

24. Paul's elder qualification in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 uses the household as the proving ground for ecclesiastical leadership. What specific things about the household would a congregation be looking for when assessing a candidate for eldership?
25. The early church met in households. What does this tell us about the relationship between the domestic order and the ecclesial order in the apostolic church?
26. What is the 'family altar,' and why does its neglect by Christian fathers have such significant consequences for the formation of their children?
27. (Advanced) Joshua 24:15 is a public declaration of household covenant allegiance. What does it mean for a Christian father to make the equivalent declaration in the contemporary context? What does it look like in practice?

Chapter Six — Objections

28. The cultural-conditioning objection claims Ephesians 5 reflects Roman patriarchal custom rather than a timeless standard. What two grounds does Paul actually give for the headship structure in Ephesians 5:23-24 and 5:31? Why do those grounds defeat the cultural-conditioning argument?
29. The mutual submission objection argues that Ephesians 5:21 ('one to another') eliminates the directional headship structure of the verses that follow. What does the passage immediately following verse 21 apply to the husband? What does it apply to the wife? Why does this resolve the apparent tension?
30. The pastoral exception objection claims that extreme circumstances justify expanding the scriptural grounds for divorce beyond what Christ named. What are the two provisions Scripture actually gives (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15)? What does it mean for pastoral integrity to hold those provisions without expanding them?

31. (Advanced) The child psychology objection claims the rod is counterproductive and harmful. What hermeneutical principle governs the answer? What legitimate concern does the objection raise, and what does Scripture itself say about how the rod must be administered (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21)?

A Closing Word: What God Has Joined

The household under God is not a private arrangement that God politely respects while attending to the church's public life. It is the covenant community's most intimate and most revealing unit — the place where what people actually believe about God, about authority, about love, and about sacrifice is most visibly enacted or most visibly contradicted.

A husband who leads his wife after the pattern of Christ — giving himself, sanctifying her, nourishing and cherishing her — is preaching the gospel in the most sustained and intimate way available to any human being. A wife who submits to that leadership with grace and honor is displaying the church's proper response to Christ in the theater of daily domestic life. Children raised in a household where both realities are genuinely present receive a formation that no institution can replicate and no curriculum can replace.

The church that teaches this clearly, holds the standard without apology, extends grace without compromising the standard, and honors the covenantal weight of every marriage it solemnizes — that church is doing justice to the full counsel of God on the most fundamental human institution he created.

What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. This is not a warning about the legal mechanism of divorce alone. It is a warning about every force — cultural, ideological, personal, doctrinal — that works against the covenant structure God embedded in creation, confirmed in Christ, and entrusted to the church to teach and protect.

Genesis 2:24

> "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*"

Continue to Book Eleven:

Stewardship, Giving, and Separation